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STATEMENT

CONCERNING CONDITIONS AFFECTING THE NEGRO
POPULATION OF THE CITY OF NEWARK.

Herron -
Supt. of Schools.

As representatives of the Negro Community Council, we are presenting an analysis of conditions affecting the Negro community of Newark as we have observed them for many years. The Community Council is a coordinating force in which are represented the many and varied organizations existing within the Negro community. This council is not motivated in any way by political aspirations or interests, or for ulterior purposes. We represent a group of citizens in Newark but not of Newark, in that the Negro citizen has suffered from an enforced isolation that has made it difficult for him to identify with Newark and the aims of Newark.

As a result of this enforced isolation, the group we represent finds itself held up to public criticism and scorn; experiences every form of social restriction and economic deprivation; and accordingly becomes the involuntary victim of those conditions which breed disease, crime, and social ostracism.

The much-publicized "crime conditions" in the Hill District do not represent an isolated phenomenon either as to time, area or peoples. We do not contend that these conditions are non-existent; we recognize their prevalence. We do contend that the crime which does exist in the Hill District has been over emphasized; has been made to appear synonymous with the Negro as a race; and has not been analyzed as to the natural causes which produce an anti-social atmosphere. Every criticism that has been made by social workers, law enforcement officers, and the press, can be traced to direct causes. Our presence here is to lay before you an objective analysis of conditions which exist, and against which we have protested vainly for years. These conditions can be changed if each person in this assembly accepts a real sense of responsibility for its changes; will face the facts sanely, objectively, and with courage. It is within your collective power--if you have the will.

As crucial as many citizens have been prone to consider our so-called crime and delinquency wave in the current emergency, we say to you in all seriousness and at the risk of being considered alarmists, that unless serious thought and attention is given to the proposals we make at this time Newark will experience a far more disturbing situation than is evident at present. The reason for such an alarming prediction is that we know that these various outbursts against society are the unconscious expressions of resentment against conditions over which these people have no control. Rebellion in the public school, purse snatching on the streets, and roughness and crudeness in the public highway, are but expressions of unbridled resentment at have been increasing year after year. Poor housing, police brutality, employment discrimination and humiliation and rebuff at every turn have been the experiences of these people. At the same time their sons and husbands and brothers, are being inducted into the Armed Services, exposed to mistreatment in Southern camps--all in the name of the four freedoms. While society in general is gravely concerned with the reception that will be afforded millions of young white Americans who believe themselves to be fighting for the four freedoms, we say to you that the return of millions of young Negro citizens who are much more cynical about the cause for which they fight, will be a much more serious concern unless upon their return they find a much better world than the one they left.

That white and black young men of America may find a better world is your responsibility and ours. As we present these analyses and proposals, we hope you will understand that they are being presented in an unemotional light and with the ardent desire that out of this conference of clear thinking and plain talk we may achieve a relationship of cooperation out of which better things may come.

I EMPLOYMENT

The major rebellions in history have grown out of conditions of poverty, social isolation and unrest which eventually became unbearable. The Negro group in Newark today is in a state of unconscious, unorganized rebellion against conditions of employment, under employment, as well as the various forms of humiliation, segregation and discrimination which face them in the most fundamental need of any people--work.

The very recent changes which have presented many additional employment outlets for Negro workers, are looked upon by Negroes as purely transitory. As yet, the Negro has not been convinced that this employment will be of permanent duration; is not accompanied by a convincing expression from employers; is not attended by the proper degree of helpful sympathetic guidance which can give a feeling of security and belongingness. While more jobs are available, discrimination has not ceased. Employment policies are as varied as are the racial attitudes of biased supervisors and captains of industry. We contend that the four freedoms are not intended to include freedom for any individual to create or perpetuate social problems because of his racial bias. We further contend that it is a civic responsibility for leaders of public thought to initiate a commonsense program for the achievement of unity in such a time of crisis. Discrimination in employment today is sabotage on two fronts; that of the unity of American citizens first, and that of reducing the value of persons qualified to serve in more productive channels.

- RECOMMENDATIONS:
- (1) That the Chamber of Commerce, employers' associations and personnel associations embark upon positive programs of fact-finding as to personnel policies in this area.
 - (2) That these agencies initiate a program of group education for employment interviewers and plant supervisors to counteract the insidious racial program which is extant.
 - (3) That a universal policy be advocated for classifying and up-grading workers regardless of race, but according to their personality, qualifications and abilities.
 - (4) That the services of qualified individuals and groups within the Negro community be utilized to serve as consultants in initiating such programs. We consider this recommendation to be extremely important because of dissatisfactions which arise out of current practices of doing things for Negroes by whites who contend that "they know the Negro."

II HOUSING

Newark is one of the most congested cities in the United States with threats that the situation will grow steadily worse. While Public Housing is quiescent for the duration, much can be done to ease the situation if aggressive action and coordination can be made part of objective planning. The Newark Negro is the victim of the worst housing to be found in an enlightened commonwealth, and his social habits, his moral, mental and physical health are bound in greater or lesser measure to reflect the sordidness of his environment.

A. Rehabilitation: Giving teeth to current ordinance on Health and Sanitation will permit wholesale rehabilitation of structures and areas which threaten the health and happiness of thousands. Arguments tending to protect the "rights" of absentee landlords are invalid when the safety and lives of human beings are involved. A program of condemnation and demolition, without rehabilitation, can only accentuate an already serious problem by rendering completely homeless those who now have shelter, however inadequate.

B. Existing Resources: The persistence of real estate operators and agents in the universal practice of limiting Negro home renters and purchasers to pre-determined areas, is unsound economics and short-sighted social practice. Public housing developments in every section of the country are providing ample proof that pride of home is an attribute possessed by Negroes to the same degree as by other groups. Residential segregation, actively promoted by some realtors in our City, is a practice that perpetuates slums by creating a false market demand for their use by persons unable to secure better facilities; this false demand in turn creating an inordinate profit for selfish owners in areas long since become a blight upon the City. The whole community must bear the staggering cost of crime, disease and social dislocation created by this policy of conscious selfishness, and the human beings forced to dwell in these modern ghettos, carry a stigma which they are not permitted to escape.

C. -F. H. A. Developments: Public housing as a national program was opposed almost universally by realtors and financial interests, on the ground that these government-subsidized developments were an invasion upon the territory of private enterprise. Concurrent with the initiation of public housing was the launching of the FHA guaranteed loan provision to stimulate private building. Despite the well-known record of housing in Newark, not one institution has considered a development for Negro citizens. Despite tremendous needs for the housing of war workers of all groups, private enterprise has done nothing to meet the need--or the challenge of government. There is no better place in the nation today in which to obtain priorities for war housing than in this great center of war production.

D. WHA WAR HOUSING: The neglect or failure of private enterprise to promote housing for wage earners, throws the challenge directly into the laps of our City fathers. National Housing Agencies are a potent cog in the federal machinery of war manpower and production. Upon proof of need, such as Newark can provide, materials and labor can be allocated for the provisions of war housing to meet our area need.

We recommend:

1. That the Real Estate Board immediately engage in a careful study of a plan for neighborhood rehabilitation, and of the possibilities for the promotion of FHA developments in Newark and for the Newark area; that it examine its policy of racial discrimination, not in terms of the fallacious "decline of value" theory, but in the light of the profession's responsibilities to Newark and the American ideal.
2. That the Commissioners of our City, with Health, Housing and real-estate representatives, explore the possibilities and initiate action for securing War Housing developments for black and white war production workers now inadequately housed, as well as for those thousands who will seek homes here in the months to come.

III. EDUCATION

The public school is the most democratic institution existing in America. But the public school is an instrument created by human beings and from time to time it is permitted to become a vehicle for human prejudices. It is our firm belief that the administrative policy of our school system is soundly democratic and unprejudiced. It is our knowledge, however, that staff interpretation and manipulation of these policies leave much to be desired.

Newark is a striking model of the American melting pot. With its more than 80,000 Italian, 60,000 Jews, 45,000 Negroes, 35,000 Poles and the many other minorities, it presents a constant challenge to a school system which must plant the seeds of loyal Americanism in the hearts of tens of thousands of children; create a feeling of belongingness which is the first and lasting hunger of the human heart.

There are far too many teachers, counsellors, and supervisors in Newark schools who fear deride, ignore or abuse children because of their lack of understanding or sympathy for these children, and the backgrounds from which they came. There are far too few of trained representatives of some of these groups employed as teachers and counsellors, that they may bring understanding to their colleagues, while achieving discipline through the comfort and belongingness all of the children in their charge seek.

Because of the decade of temporary and substitute teacher economy which Newark has permitted, our teaching staff has tended toward stagnation. With the completion of the recent examinations will come an opportunity to completely democratize our school system.

We Recommend: The immediate initiation of carefully-planned courses on intercultural and interracial relations for teachers and counsellors in our primary and secondary school systems; and that the Board of Education, short of mandatory rule urge the acceptance of such courses by teachers having under their jurisdiction large representations of minority groups.

That the Board of Education neglect no opportunity to appoint qualified Negro teachers to elementary and secondary school faculties and counsellor-ships.

That the Board of Education initiate a plan requiring home visitations by teachers serving in areas of the City where minority group isolation results in dislocation, truancy and behavior problems; that the current practice of arbitrary "summons" of parents which is creating much parent-teacher conflict, may be eliminated.

That more visiting teachers and more vocational counsellors, in each instance to be persons thoroughly grounded in an understanding of minority group problems, be assigned to the areas in question.

IV HEALTH

We mention this realm of civic organization more as evidence of what can occur in other areas if conviction, foresight and courage are employed. Through the employment of doctors and nurses of every group; by planning objectively and scientifically to attack disease, without regard to the color of its carrier, Newark has gained national recognition for its health accomplishments. This, in spite of one of the worst housing conditions to be found on the eastern seaboard. This, in spite of constant clamor for economy; this, in spite of opposition from die-hards who insist that racial lines be held hard and fast. We strongly urge the adoption by others of the democratic principles which have brought such rich dividends to our City through this department of service.

V LAW ENFORCEMENT

Inasmuch as most of the current hue and cry has centered in the area of delinquency and crime, we feel that a great deal of thought is required in analyzing the existing situation. Earlier in this statement we have indicated there is resentment and unrest; references have been made to the sordid conditions in our congested communities which breed illness and crime. Anti-social expression found in a community is not something that can be attributed to a racial or nationality strain and thus dispose of the question.

Select the most favorite area of any City; permit an unlimited number of taverns and liquor stores to operate in unrestrained fashion; remove any form of zoning restriction which will permit businesses of any sort to occupy sidewalks and streets; throw over this area the pall of social ostracism, and the end result will be the same.

In almost any conference on delinquency two remedies invariably are proposed: (1) provide recreational facilities and (2) do something to make parents assume their responsibilities. The answer is not as simple as these two statements would imply. Recreation is an essential outlet for youthful energies which will be turned into blind alleys unless more wholesome provisions are supplied. Parents, who themselves are frustrated and harassed, can not supply a philosophy that will keep the inexperienced child in the proper channel for balanced growth. It is the responsibility of society to make it possible for parents to control their children. It is the responsibility of the protective arm of society, the law enforcement agencies, to realize that their function is not alone one to apply punitive measures; but to extend a degree of understanding and sympathy of underlying problems which are responsible for the minor forms of anti-social expression.

Negroes in the Hill District for a considerable length of time have had little cause to feel that law enforcement agencies in Newark have been other than repressive forces. In past years there have been innumerable beatings of innocent people, and the outright killing of persons for unexplained reasons. The third-degree method of exacting confessions has been employed freely and with impunity upon Negroes until very recent months. The contempt expressed by various individual officers of the local police force toward any Negro regardless of his station, has been a direct means of minimizing the respect that an American citizen is supposed to hold for officers of the law. The exclusion of Negro officers from the regular police force has been looked upon by Negroes as a symbol of the attitude which prevails in administrative circles. While the claim is made that Negroes have not qualified for these positions under the provisions of the Civil Service Commission, this organization in turn has excluded Negro candidates on the absurd "flatfoot" issue. This commission in turn indicates that their requirements have been set up to meet the demands of the officials of the City of Newark. The officials of the City of Newark in turn have never repudiated this claim. We wish it clearly understood that this statement is not uttered as an indictment of any acting commissioner or commissioners, but rather as a factual statement of the subtle and indirect means that have been employed in years past to prevent Negroes from feeling themselves a part of this branch of the City government.

In like measure the situation as it relates to juvenile delinquency represents an almost total picture of exclusion. Children who present truancy or behavior problems beyond the control of the teacher in the public school are sent to the Juvenile Court. Failure of our Community to provide facilities for treatment of these pre-delinquent children results in many of them being recorded as delinquents and committed to state institutions, thereby making the first black mark against a human being whose only crime is misdirected energy. Nowhere in the Family Court set-up, Domestic Relations Court, Juvenile Court or Parental Home, is there a Negro to interpret the problems of those whose fate rests in the hands of the white community. These same complaints were registered a few years ago against the Probation Department of Essex County, and we wish to pay tribute to the courage and fair-mindedness of this department of law enforcement that provisions were made to include qualified persons of the Negro race on the staff of that organization. The community reaction to the department, the cooperation extended to it, and the results obtained have improved immeasurably as a result of a new policy which we earnestly hope will be broadened even there.

With this one exception, therefore, we see in force a policy where the colored population has only a negative experience with law enforcement--nothing of a positive nature that will permit identification with this arm of government. It is a perfectly natural human reaction that resentment results.

We recommend:

1. That the proposed ordinance creating a new "special" category known as investigator in the Police Department be defeated, and that the Department of Public Safety refrain from the creation of such "special" categories which require of such appointees less exacting qualifications than would be true of policemen or policewomen, and accordingly deprive them of the degree of training, authority and supervision that would enable them to accomplish the task at hand.
2. That the Department of Public Safety declare the expiration of existing Civil Service registries for policemen, policewomen and firemen at the termination of the customary two-year period, and that new examinations be set up for promulgation of new lists of officer candidates.
3. That the Department of Public Safety declare officially to the Civil Service Commission, and publicly, that in physical qualifications a candidate may not be excluded on the ground of congenital "flat-feet."
4. That the Department of Public Safety take immediate steps for the selection and assignment of qualified Negro women as provisional appointees, pending regular Civil Service examinations *for Police women.*
5. That the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts have assigned at least two well-qualified case workers, one of whom shall be a Negro, to provide investigatory and supervisory services to the children and parents of children coming under the jurisdiction of these courts.
6. Earlier reference to the numerous taverns, liquor stores and night clubs operating in the Third Ward, have been made. Nowhere else in Newark have liquor licenses been issued with such laxish hand; nowhere else does supervision seem so lax. We recommend a careful evaluation of all petitions for re-licensing when current certificates expire, and a drastic thinning out of such establishments; provided that the very few Negro operators in the area shall not be the first to suffer withdrawals through operation of well-known racial distinction patterns.

VI SOCIAL AGENCIES

The Negro community for a number of years has displayed its willingness and its talents for offering specialized services to its clientele. In the City of Newark are five agencies attempting to bring service to the Negro community and interpretation of its needs in order to combat the combined forces which today are responsible for conditions we deprecate.

It is extremely significant that these five agencies serving a potential clientele of over 45,000 people, the great majority of whom are under-privileged, have a combined total budget not to exceed 30,000 dollars. Comparison of this figure with the amount appropriated and expended for the service to another minority group only slightly larger and in much more favored economic and social circumstances, is a sad commentary upon the degree of sympathy and objectivity with which the problems of the Negro are viewed. We contend that the degree of service these agencies are permitted to extend the Negro community, as measured by the facilities and staff with which they are equipped out of the total community resources will forever stand as an index of the community's serious interest in the problems we are here to discuss.

We Recommend:

- I. That the Welfare Federation initiate a critical study of these agencies, their programs and their needs, and that as a result of this evaluation apply a new and more adequate degree of financial support that they may be properly equipped for the tasks they are set up to do.

VII CITY AFFAIRS

As we have touched upon each phase of the problem as we in the Negro community have seen it, references to the City Commission have been made. One general observation that we wish to inject into this discussion is that there is evidence of a chronic disregard of 10% of the city population represented in the Negro group in the matter of appointments to departments, committees and commissions in city affairs. The present City Commission has made a slight move in the proper direction in the designation of Housing Authority Member, Board of Education member, Fair Employment Practices Committee, and in two or three less important functions. We contend that the interpretations of the Negro community have been unfavorable to the Negro citizens mainly because of the absence of qualified persons in positions of importance to provide such authoritative interpretations.

We Recommend:

Strongly, that the City Commissioners select and appoint qualified Negro citizens to civic posts of responsibility with exactly the same freedom and indiscriminate selection as is applied to other groups in our City; that we deplore the creation of special categories into which occasional Negro appointees may be locked as in a cubicle.

CONCLUSION

As we bring this statement to a close, may we again state that these criticism and recommendations have been presented in plain language, not to arouse conflict and antagonism, but rather to provoke honest discussion of issues which we are sure all of you recognize as pertinent. In every instance, we have offered constructive suggestions where criticisms have been levelled; we hope you will reciprocate by accepting both criticism and recommendation where good judgment enables you to recognize their validity.

Halsey
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Newark Evening
News